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THE WHITE CHIEF

BY

CLARA J. DENTON.

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Franklin, Ohio

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ELDRIDGE ENTERTAINMENT HOUSE

Franklin, Ohio

The White Chief.

A Thanksgiving Playlet.

By CLARA J. DENTON.

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ELDRIDGE ENTERTAINMENT HOUSE.
FRANKLIN, OHIO.

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CHARACTERS. (Mentioned in order of speaking.)

JANE, the maid.

ELLEN, eldest married daughter of Mrs. Gordon.

MRS. GORDON, widow whose only son was stolen by Indians on Thanksgiving morning thirty years before the play opens.

MARY, Mrs. Gordon's second married daughter.

NELLIE, child of Ellen.

TOMMIE, child of Mary.

LOUISE, a cousin.

FANNIE, another cousin.

UNCLE PETER, an old friend of the family.

THE "WHITE CHIEF."

Other friends and relatives of the family, as many as desired.

Ordinary costumes suited to the occasion are worn.

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The White Chief.

SCENE. The dining-room in a farm house.

The following characters are discovered: Jane, Ellen, Mrs. Gordon, Mary, Nellie, Tommie, Louise and Fannie.

Jane stands near long table holding a pile of dinner plates. Ellen and Mary are adjusting a tablecloth on the table. Mrs. Gordon is seated in a rocker at right. Martha in a child's rocker near her, holding a doll. Tommie on floor at center, looking at a picture book. The two cousins on a sofa at left.

During the dialogue the sisters are setting the table. Jane, after depositing the plates on the table, retires to the kitchen for more dishes, etc. This business is continued naturally as long as necessary.

Jane. These plates were on the top shelf of the cupboard and they had to be washed.

Ellen. Mother hasn't used them for a long time, but when we have a dinner like the one we have planned for today, we need the largest plates we can get. Thanksgiving dinners don't go very well on tea plates.

Mrs. G. Thanksgiving without snow doesn't go very well either, but we have to put up with it. I wonder how it would seem to have an old-fashioned Michigan Thanksgiving.

Ellen. Yes, mother, our Michigan weather has changed wonderfully and I do wish you would change a little by not working every minute of your life. Come, do put your knitting away.

Mary. Yes, mother, it will make my Thanksgiving day much more thankful if you spend part of it in sitting with folded hands.

Mrs. G. You shouldn't say that when you know I am happy only when I am working.

Ellen. Yes, sister, and you forget that there is probably a baby somewhere among the Gordon relatives who hasn't more than half a dozen socks to its poor little bare feet. There is one thing sure, if any of the kiddies get the stomach ache because of cold feet it will not be your fault, mother dear. Sister, see, is this the proper way to place the knives and forks?

Mary. Oh, my, no. That way is all out of style.

Ellen. Why, that used to be just the thing.

Mary. I know it, but our next door neighbor was visiting in the city last week and the cousin of her hostess went to a perfectly swell banquet and the knives and forks and spoons were all placed like this, (*changes them*) that other way is countrified now.

Louise (*rising and coming toward the table.*) Well, lets have them that way then, I like country ways for country folks.

Fannie. Well, I don't, I think country folks have as much right to city ways as the city folks themselves.

Nellie. Grandma, I wish you would knit some socks for my newest doll, will you?

Mrs. G. Yes, dear, just as soon as I finish this pair.

Nellie . But my doll is barefoot, (*holds her up showing bare feet,*) don't you feel sorry for her?

Tommie. Oh, Grandma, if you're sorry for her dolly what must you think of this poor little Indian boy, (*holds up picture book*) see here, grandma, he is barefoot out in the snow. I didn't know Indians went barefoot in the winter. (*Ellen and Mary stop working with startled faces. Mrs. G. rises quickly, exits L.*)

Mary. Didn't you know any better, Tommie, than to talk to grandma on Thanksgiving day about Indians?

Tommy. Oh, say Ma, I forgot all about her little baby boy.

Nellie. Tommie has the biggest forgettery you you ever saw.

Louise. But why does she mind more on Thanksgiving day than on other days?

Ellen. Dear me, don't you remember it was on Thanksgiving morning when my baby brother disappeared?

Louise. Oh, dear, was it? How did it happen? Do you know, I have never heard the whole story yet.

Fannie. (*Rising and coming toward table.*) Neither have I.

Tommy. Oh say, aunt Ellen, tell it, won't you?

Nellie. Yes, do ma, 'cause if Tommie hears it all maybe he'll know better than to say Indians on Thanksgiving day. I know better than that, don't I ma?

Tommie. Nellie thinks she's awfully smart.

Mary. Come now children, don't quarrel on Thanksgiving day.

Fannie. Go on Ellen, with your story.

Ellen. Well, it is a short, sad story soon told. It was thirty years ago this Thanksgiving morning and we were to have our nearest neighbors in for a big Thanksgiving dinner. That was in the early days of Michigan, you know, when the neighbors lived together happily and took turns in making feasts for one another. As soon as we were done eating breakfast, on that Thanksgiving morning, mother said she would go to the barn and get the vegetables ready for dinner so that she could leave the refuse in the pigpen near by. Mary and I were to wash the dishes. We gathered them up and carried them into the pantry. Just as we began our little brother waked up and father took him up and dressed him.

Mary. Yes, I can see yet just how he looked when he peaked through the crack in the pantry door

at me, but go on, Ellen, you can tell the story better than I can.

Ellen. He was a great mother boy and he began teasing for her before he was dressed. Father thought it would be a fine surprise for mother to let the baby go to the barn after her, so as soon as he was dressed, he bundled him up and told him that mother was at the barn. He was a sturdy little fellow and went there every day of his life, but he had never before gone quite alone.

Louise. Was the barn far away?

Ellen. Yes, about ten rods away, but in plain sight on a hill, there was a little hollow between the house and barn, where the baby could not be seen for a moment or so. Just as he came to the top of the hollow, father smelled mother's pies burning, he ran to look after them and when he went back to the window the baby was out of sight. So taking it for granted that the baby was with mother he paid no more attention to the matter.

Mary. You must remember that Ellen and I could not see the barn from the pantry window.

Ellen. It was a long time before mother returned to the house, she had cut up a squash, hunted the eggs, looked after the chickens and so on, and when she did come back to the house the baby was not only not with her, but she said she had not seen him.

All. Oh! oh! how dreadful!

Fannie. But how did they know the Indians had taken the little fellow?

Mary. Some strange Indians had been seen passing along the road that morning. There were plenty of friendly Indians living in the neighborhood at that time and they helped father hunt for our brother, but we never found any trace of either our brother or the strange Indians.

Louise. And you never have found any trace of him at all?

Mary. Never. Father spent a great deal of

money traveling around and advertising, but it did no good. A few months after father died when the little boy had been gone many years we read in a paper about some Indians away out west who had a white man for their chief, but at that time we didn't have money enough to go off on a search like that.

Ellen. We might go now, if we knew the name of the place, but we burned the paper so that grandma couldn't see it.

Tommy. Well, you just wait until I'm a man, I'll go off and find that white chief, he'd be my uncle Will, wouldn't he?

Nellie. And mine too. I'm going with you when you go after him.

Tommy. Huh, girls can't go where the Indians are.

Nellie. They can too, guess I'd know my uncle Will when I saw him, jus's much's you would.

Ellen. There now, children don't talk about Indians, especially before grandma and on Thanksgiving day.

Fannie. It's a wonder your mother will keep Thanksgiving at all.

Mary. She never did until since father died, but now she seems to want us all together at least once a year.

Tommy. Well, when I'm a man I'll find the White Chief, I'll go all over where there are any Indians, and if I see a white man there I'll go right up to him and say, hello uncle Will! (*All laugh.*)

Ellen. Well, there now, I believe the table is all set.

Mary. Yes, and the dinner is all ready, it's time the folks were here.

Nellie. (*Running to window R.*) Oh! there they are, a whole carriage load, and there's uncle Peter, my I'm glad!

Tommy. (*Running to window.*) So am I, he's so funny, he'll tell us all about the Jabberwocky.

Ellen. Run and get the slippers out of the closet, Nellie, so they'll be handy for Uncle Peter.

Nellie. (*Going up and exit.*) But how can they be handy when they go on his feet? Guess they'll be footy.

Tommy. And there's another great tall man I never saw before, he has black hair and he looks just like my grandfather's picture.

All. (*Running to window.*) What? what?

Ellen. Do you suppose it can be?

Mary. Oh! what will mother say? There, they are all coming in.

(*Enter relatives, White Chief last, business of greeting.*)

Uncle Peter. (*Pointing to White Chief.*) Have you any idea who this is?

Ellen. He seems like father come back again.

Mary. (*Going close to him.*) You certainly do look like father.

White Chief. I am your long lost brother, girls. It was a long road to the barn, wasn't it?

Ellen. What will mother say?

Mary. I fear she will die of joy. Uncle Peter, go into her room and prepare her for this great surprise.

White Chief. Tell her the White Chief of the Comanche tribe in Oklahoma is bringing her news of her lost son. (*Exit Uncle Peter L.*)

Ellen. The minute she sees you, she will know you.

Mary. Of course she will, you look exactly as father did.

Ellen. But do tell us, how did you get here?

White Chief. Of course I have always known that I was different from the other Indians, but I never knew who I was until last week, the Indian who kidnapped me confessed when he was dying. He told me all about it and gave me the little clothes I wore when I was stolen, so here I am.

Uncle Peter. (*At L. Exit.*) Come on now, your mother is ready to see you. (*Exit L.*)

Nellie. (*Enters carrying slippers.*) Here are uncle Peter's slippers, why doesn't he come and put them on?

Tommy. Oh never mind him, you have a real uncle now to get slippers for, our uncle Will the White Chief has come back.

Nellie. Oh, I don't believe it.

Tommy. Yes he has, I know it 'cause he said I looked just like he used to.

Ellen. My but this will be a real Thanksgiving.

Mary. So it will, so it will.

Tommy. Yes, and won't I have fun after dinner listening to his Indian stories, all about the scalping and the warwhoops and—everything?

Nellie. I don't want to hear all about all those wicked things, I'd rather hear uncle Peter tell about the Jabberwocky.

Louise. Indians don't do wicked things like that now.

Fannie. No they are civilized and live like white folks.

Nellie. Say, Tommy, aren't you sorry we can't go hunt up uncle Will now?

Tommy. You needn't care 'cause I wasn't going to let you go anyway.

(*Enter from L. Mrs. Gordon leaning on White Chief's arm, followed by Uncle Peter, they come to C.*

Ellen. Well, come folks, dinner is all ready and waiting. (*They move toward table and while they are being seated the curtain falls.*)

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